

VERMONT POLL

Vermont Alliance for Ethical Healthcare

4/13

New Poll Shows:*

- ▲ **67%** of Vermonters **DO NOT** support Oregon-style doctor-assisted suicide legislation.

- ▲ **68%** of Vermonters **DO** believe an Oregon-style law would create at least three serious problems.

- ▲ **60%** of Vermonters **DO NOT** believe doctor-assisted suicide should be a legislative priority.

The Vermont Alliance for Ethical Healthcare commissioned a poll on doctor-assisted suicide, conducted March 5 -7, 2013. The poll was conducted just after the Senate vote on S.77, when the issue was generating considerable news coverage.

Vermonters were asked whether they support: leaving Vermont law as it is; an Oregon-style law; or the compromise that removes a doctor's liability if a terminally ill patient chose to take an overdose of a prescribed medication and died as a result.

Respondents were then asked whether they thought any of nine serious problems that could result from an Oregon-style law would or would not happen. After hearing the concerns of opponents of an Oregon-style law, participants were asked again what they support. Below are the before and after levels of support for the three options.

Level of support:	<u>Oregon-Style</u>	<u>Leave Law As It Is</u>	<u>Compromise Position</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
Before Concerns	36.1%	31.5%	27.6%	4.8%
After Concerns	32.9%	35.7%	27.6%	3.8%

Poll questions

Currently the Vermont State Legislature is debating a proposal to legalize Doctor-assisted suicide which is prohibited under Vermont law. Three different positions have been advocated. The first is to leave Vermont law as it is. The second is to enact an Oregon-style law that allows a doctor to give a terminally ill person a prescription for lethal drugs to take their own life. The third is a compromise that would simply remove a doctor's liability if their terminally ill patient chose to take an overdose of a prescribed medication and died as a result.

Which of these three do you support: leave current Vermont law as it is, an Oregon-style law, or the compromise position?

	%
Leave current VT law as it is	31.5
An Oregon-style law	36.1
Compromise position	27.6
Undecided	4.8

• Possibilities •

A number of organizations including the Vermont Medical Society and disability rights groups are opposed to an Oregon-style doctor-prescribed suicide bill. They fear that such a law would create serious problems. For each of the following problems please tell me if you think the problem *will* happen, *probably will* happen, *probably will not* happen, or *will not* happen. (A total of nine possibilities were presented; what follows are a sampling.)

Some insurance companies, trying to keep costs down, will deny or delay claims for treatment, instead steering patient to a cheaper, doctor-prescribed suicide option.

	%
Will happen	14.5
Probably will happen	34.9
Probably will not happen	28.1
Will not happen	16.2
Undecided	6.3

Some family members, standing to gain financially, will encourage terminally ill patients to choose doctor-prescribed suicide.

	%
Will happen	16.3
Probably will happen	35.3
Probably will not happen	32.7
Will not happen	11.7
Undecided	4.0

Some doctors will, on occasion, wrongly diagnose illnesses as terminal when they are not.

	%
Will happen	16.6
Probably will happen	36.6
Probably will not happen	30.9
Will not happen	12.9
Undecided	3.0

Some patients will request doctor-prescribed suicide so he or she won't be a financial burden on his or her family or spouse.

	%
Will happen	17.4
Probably will happen	45.7
Probably will not happen	24.7

Will not happen	9.9
Undecided	2.2

If the legislature votes to legalize doctor-prescribed suicide, state government will become more involved in the doctor – patient relationship.

	%
Will happen	19.8
Probably will happen	31.9
Probably will not happen	27.7
Will not happen	17.0
Undecided	3.6

Some patients, who are already victims of some form of elder abuse, will be pressured into doctor-prescribed suicide without full, fair, and informed consent.

	%
Will happen	13.7
Probably will happen	35.4
Probably will not happen	31.7
Will not happen	16.4
Undecided	2.8

• Informed Ballot •

Now that you have heard some of the concern of opponents of assisted suicide, which of the three options do you now support: leaving current Vermont law as it is, an Oregon-style law, or the compromise position?

	%
Leave current VT law as it is	35.7
An Oregon-style law	32.9
Compromise position	27.6
Undecided	3.8

• Legislative Priority •

Now let's talk for a brief moment about priorities.

Some [other] people believe that doctor-assisted suicide is an important issue, and should be a legislative priority for 2013. Other [Some] people believe the legislature should be tackling much more important problems than doctor-prescribed suicide.

How about you? Do you believe doctor-prescribed suicide should, or should not be a legislative priority for 2013?

	%
Should be a priority	37.2
Should not be a priority	60.2
Undecided	2.6

Vermont Assisted Suicide Statewide Survey

Field Dates: March 5-7, 2013 • Sample Size: 500 completed interviews Vermont • Sampling Error: • Less than +/- 5.0%

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